



# Resource Family Connection

## News, Events, and Information Benefiting the Children of Waukesha County November and December, 2020



## Conversations that Matter: Talking with Children About Big World Issues By: Julie Olsen Edwards and Louise Derman-Sparks

The current COVID-19 pandemic has produced a broad sense of unease and fear which transmits the message that the world is not safe (however much adults try to shield young children). Many children in quarantine with their families are experiencing exceptional amounts of screen time - and having to make sense of images, ideas, and terminology that can foster fear and prejudice. Included in these messages are racist ideas falsely attributing the cause of the coronavirus to people of Chinese descent and, by extension, to people of other Asian and Pacific ethnicities. However, as challenging as this period is, it also offers opportunities to engage young children in rich, meaningful conversations.

In addition, beginning in the month of May and beyond, even very young children heard about, saw on television, or saw in person the wide-spread demonstrations focusing on the need to end racism in police systems and other societal institutions. Children need help making sense of what they are seeing and hearing. These conversations also offer us important, teachable moments to engage young children in discussion about their identities, human diversity, fairness and unfairness, and the right of people to stand up for their beliefs.

Children rely on their trusted adults to help them make sense of the confusing messages the world sends them about what and who are safe and okay. Children need direct, truthful responses shaped to meet their developmental level of understanding. But all too often, when children express their confusion, pre-prejudice or fears, adults try to reassure them without addressing the specific anxiety and issue. For example, when someone sneezes, a child looks worried and asks, "Are we going to die?" The adult offers an unsatisfactory, generic reply: "Everything is okay. There's nothing to worry about."

Similarly, when a child makes a comment that reflects biased ideas about human diversity, many adults do not directly address the underlying issue. For example, while taking a walk around the block and passing people wearing masks, a 4-year-old white child points to a white person and asks her mother, "Is that a nurse?" Her mother replies, "No, that is one of our neighbors wearing a mask to help her and us stay well." A little later, they pass a masked person with dark skin. The child points and states, "That's a robber." This time her mother stays quiet, not knowing what to say. Later, she calls her child's teacher to ask him what she might have said.

### The Hurtful Power of Silence

Silence is a powerful teacher. What you do not say carries messages that are as strong as what you do say. Regardless of your intent, the unwillingness to talk with a child openly and directly about the world sends serious, strong, and potentially hurtful messages. When adults are silent or vague about things that children are seeing and trying to understand, children absorb the emotional message that the subject is not okay to talk about. This leaves children with an undercurrent of anxiety and unease, which are the earliest lessons about bias and fear. Consider:

- ✧ Silence robs children of a vocabulary to ask questions or talk about what is confusing or troubling to them.

- ✧ Silence forces children to figure things out on their own using their limited understanding of the world.
- ✧ Silence teaches fear - the subject is so unsafe the adults will not even talk about it.
- ✧ Silence forces children to rely on sources such as other children (the 6-year-old next door, a 10-year-old cousin) and the media (TV, advertising, videos) for information, including how they should feel and think about what is happening in their world. These are major sources of inaccurate and often stereotyped information.

### General Guidelines for Brave Conversations with Children

Children depend on adults to help them figure out what things mean. Children's curiosity, puzzlement, and anxiety provide rich opportunities for adults to respond to their attempts to understand what they observe happening in their world. Our responsibility is to give accurate, developmentally appropriate, matter-of-fact information that helps children develop the conviction that, when the world is unsafe, there are always people who are working to make it safe. They also need information and values that enable them to thrive in a world of diversity and to resist messages of bias and hate.

Here are some basic guidelines to help you hold meaningful conversations with children in the face of difficult events and situations.

- ✧ **Make it safe.** As always, the first thing to do when children are distressed is to be a safe and reassuring presence for all the children.
- ✧ **Find out what children know.** Without judgment, find out what children are feeling and thinking and how they make sense of the situation. Listen carefully and verbally reflect children's thinking back to them (however inaccurate). Give names to their feelings.
- ✧ **Tell the truth.** Say, "Here's what I know about what is happening" or "This is what I think about what you saw/said/did." Clarify misinformation as factually or simply as you can: "Some people call it the 'China virus,' but that is not a true statement. This virus is all over the world." Think about what information children need for processing their feelings as well as for clarifying information.
- ✧ **Check back in with children.** Check back in to find out how the children feel and think about what they have heard from you. Ask children if they have more questions - and proceed depending on what they say. Expect to have several conversations pertaining to this topic over time.
- ✧ **State the justice issues.** Talk about what is hurtful or helpful, what is fair or unfair in the situation. Share your own (or your school's) values: "In our family, we..." or "In our classroom, we..."
- ✧ **Give children something to do to make it better.** Let children know there are people working to fix the problems. Ask them for their ideas of what they can do to help. Support children to do something age-appropriate about the situation.

## Conversations that Matter: Talking with Children About Big World Issues (Continued from page 1)

Sometimes, the words just do not come. You are uncertain how to simplify complicated issues or worry about saying something wrong. Regardless, do not let this wonderful opportunity slip away. Take a deep breath, repeat what you have heard from the child, and then use phrases like the following:

- \* "This is really important, and I need to think about how we can talk about it."
- \* "I'm not sure what words to use right now. But I am going to ask Candra to help me, and we will all talk about this tomorrow."
- \* "You know, when I was your age no one helped me think about this, so I'm not sure what words to use. But I'll think about this and we will talk later."

And then - follow up! Bring up the issue and begin a new dialogue that may continue for brief periods over several days.

What is wonderful is that every time you engage in brave conversations like these, you, the children, and the other adults in the children's lives all get better at listening and talking together about hard topics. And children learn to trust that their special adults are truly there to help them maneuver a complicated world.

## Christmas Clearing Council

If you:

1. Live in Waukesha County;
  2. Have children of school age that attend school in Waukesha County;
  3. Have placement of the children you intend to apply for;
  4. Meet the income guidelines for the federal free or reduced lunch program...
- ... You may qualify for assistance in giving your child(ren) gifts this year.

Helpful reminders:

- \* You may begin applying TODAY. Last application will be accepted at 11:59 p.m. on November 16, 2020. Do not wait until the last minute to apply.
- \* If you have a change in address or phone number after submitting the application, contact us immediately with an update as it is imperative sponsors have the correct information to contact you.
- \* Some agencies have requested paper applications. If you have already filled out and submitted a paper application, you do **not** need to fill out an application online.
- \* If your family has special circumstances, due to COVID-19 or otherwise, that would be beneficial for us to know when determining eligibility. Please email us at [applications@christmasclearingcouncil.org](mailto:applications@christmasclearingcouncil.org). We will combine this information with your application. You **MUST STILL** fill out an online application.
- \* We will make every effort to make sure ALL families get sponsored this year. All sponsors will be given guidelines to conduct a safe gift exchange with you. Because Toy Shop is cancelled for 2020, any family not sponsored will be notified by our office when they can pick up a gift packet for their children. Gift packet distribution days are tentatively scheduled for early December.

Understanding this year presents new challenges for all, please reach out with questions at [info@christmasclearingcouncil.org](mailto:info@christmasclearingcouncil.org) or after October 12 at (262) 771-0909.

**Apply Today** at: <http://www.christmasclearingcouncil.org/get-help.html>

**Deadline:** Monday, November 16, 2020 at 11:59 p.m.

## Steve and Nancy Johnson

Steve and Nancy Johnson have known each other their whole lives - living in the same small town, and eventually marrying. They were high school sweethearts, and after 37 years of marriage, have two children, three grandchildren, and one great-grandchild - all of whom live in the Milwaukee area, except their youngest son who lives in Tennessee working as a chef.



Steve is retired and Nancy still works but hopes to join him in the "good" life in a few years.

They both love to golf and spend any free time they have, golfing with friends. Steve does give up some golf time helping elderly friends/neighbors with whatever they need - if only he'd spend some time on Nancy's "honey do" list as well!

Their life raising their children always seemed very average - school, sporting events, family time, vacations - which was exactly perfect for them. They were then thrown a curve ball when their oldest son, much later in life, made choices that resulted in an unsafe environment for their two grandchildren. They could have taken their son and his children all into their home, but they knew that wasn't going to result in the best outcome for everyone. So Steve and Nancy contacted CPS and brought the children into their home to live until their parents were able to provide a safe environment.

Seemed like in a heartbeat, Steve and Nancy were no longer independent empty nesters and fun Grandparents, but rather, back in the parent role with an elementary and a high school child. This was new territory for them, but they realized they needed support and guidance from people who have navigated this path before - so they started working with Waukesha County to understand the relative caregiver role, how best to work with various services offered, and most importantly, how to provide the emotional help their grandchildren may need.

The learning opportunities provided through the foster program have helped Steve and Nancy to understand not only what the children are going through, but also how best to continue to engage their son and help him to get back on the right path. As a mother, Nancy appreciates that tremendously. The foster program has also provided an opportunity to engage with a support group of other relative caregivers. With such a huge change for the Johnson family, the support group was another learning avenue and helped them and their grandchildren to see that there are others in the same situation.

Ultimately, their goal, and their biggest hope, is that their son is able to recover and become the parent he should be. Becoming certified as relative caregivers, and with the resources offered to them, their grandchildren, and their son by Waukesha County, Steve and Nancy have faith that will be possible.

The Waukesha County Foster Care Program and staff would like to recognize the Johnson family for their support and commitment! You are truly amazing!

## Helpful Links

### No Matter What - Stories of Hope and Resilience

This website is dedicated to sharing real stories from real people. Foster parents, adoptive parents, relative caregivers, and more share moments of vulnerability, courage, and insight.  
<https://nomatterwhatfamilies.org/>

### Waukesha County Human Services Resource Guide

A resource guide to services in the Waukesha County area.  
<https://www.waukeshacounty.gov/globalassets/health-human-services/moraine-lakes-consortium/waukesha-county-human-services-guide-002.pdf>





## Kinship Care Week

November is Family Caregiver Month and the first week, November 1-7, is designated as Kinship Care Week. The Wisconsin's Family Caregiver Support Programs Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/WisconsinFamilyCaregiver>) will be sharing a post each day which will include a fact/stat about kinship caregivers, a highlighted resource, and a "challenge of the day" such as, "Share why being a relative caregiver is important to you." Answer the challenge of the day to be entered into a drawing for \$25 Amazon gift cards, compliments of Respite Care Association of Wisconsin. Register for the events now so you won't miss any of the fun!

## Looking to Donate?

If you have clothes or other household items that you are looking to donate this holiday season, here are some places that could use your help!

### Benedict Center

Their current biggest need is for women's winter coats. They also accept gently used women's clothing for their Sisters Program.

More Information: <https://www.benedictcenter.org/>

### Chosen (Waukesha)

This organization accepts an array of items from children's clothing to furniture. All donations support foster and adoptive families.

More Information: <https://choseninlove.org/thefamilycloset/>

### Courage MKE

Courage MKE empowers youth who identify as LGBTQ+ and your donation will provide youth with the necessities while they learn life skills and discover their strength.

More Information: <https://www.couragemke.org/>

### Hope Center (Waukesha)

Hope Center also accepts an array of items; check out their website for a complete list.

More Information: <https://hopecenterwi.org/>

### Lake Country Caring

Lake Country Caring accepts gently used clothing as well as furniture and housing needs. They have a list of needed items on their website.

More Information: <https://www.lakecountrycaring.com/>

## West Allis Farmer's Market

The West Allis Farmers' Market offers a wide variety of seasonal produce, fresh meats and eggs, honey and maple syrup, fresh-cut flowers and annual plants, and prepared food from local, Wisconsin farms.

Days/Times: Tuesdays/Thursdays Noon - 6:00 p.m.

Saturdays 1:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Open until the Saturday after Thanksgiving.

More Information: <https://westallisfarmersmarket.com/>

## Sledding Hills

Here is a listing of County and City parks that have sledding hills!

<https://lakecountryfamilyfun.com/local-sledding-hills/>

## Waukesha County Offices Closed for Holidays

Thursday/Friday, November 26 - 27, 2020: Closed for Thanksgiving

Thursday/Friday, December 24 - 25, 2020: Closed for Christmas

Thursday/Friday, December 31, 2020 - January 1, 2021: Closed for New Years



## Holiday Fun

If you are looking for some fun activities to do as the holidays near, check out some of these great ideas!

### Waukesha Christmas Parade

Winding through the Main Street of downtown, this parade features marching bands, floats, and a special appearance from Santa! Kids should bring letters for Santa. Come early to enjoy pre-parade family festivities.

Date: Sunday, November 22, 2020

Time: 4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

More Information: <https://www.waukeshaworks.com/parade.html>

### Candy Cane Lane

Come take a stroll or drive through the neighborhood (remember to drive with your lights on!). Not only will you see a stellar display of holiday lights and spirit, great daily entertainment, but chances are - you'll get to see Santa too!

Where: West Allis; from Montana Avenue on the north to Oklahoma Avenue on the south; and from 96th Street on the west to 92nd Street on the East

When: November 27 - December 26, 2020

Days/Times: Weekdays, 6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Weekends, 5:00 pm - 10:00 p.m.

More Information: <https://www.facebook.com/candycanelane.westallis>

### Santa is Coming to Brookfield

Beautiful bright lights, Christmas carols, refreshments, and a whole lot of fun describes this great holiday celebration!

Where: Corners Shopping Center, on the market square (if poor weather threatens the day, the event will be moved inside to Von Maur)

Date: Wednesday, December 2, 2020

Time: 6:30 p.m.

More Information: [http://www.townofbrookfield.com/ParkRec/Special\\_Events/SpecialEvents.html](http://www.townofbrookfield.com/ParkRec/Special_Events/SpecialEvents.html)

### Hartland Lights 2020

Caroling, Santa, tree lighting, and more holiday festivities! Free trolley service will get you to the businesses!

Where: Downtown Hartland,

Participating Businesses

Date: Friday, December 4, 2020

Time: 6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

More Information: <https://www.downtownhartland.com/events/hartland-lights-2014/>



### Mukwonago Midnight Magic

Christmas events all day include a Christmas parade, pictures with Santa, holiday craft fair, live nativity scene, horse drawn carriage rides, fireworks, and more!

Where: Various locations throughout the Village of Mukwonago

Date: Saturday, December 5, 2020

Time: 10:00 a.m. - Midnight

More Information: <https://www.mukwonagochamber.org/midnightmagic>

### Oconomowoc Christmas Parade

Downtown Oconomowoc Christmas parade lights up the holiday season. The parade is lighted as it travels through downtown. You not only see the dazzling floats, but you'll see a live nativity head through downtown as they prepare to present at local church, St. Matthew's, following the parade. And of course, Santa makes it; he sends his elves out ahead of him to get your Christmas wish lists, so be sure to bring them!

Where: Downtown Oconomowoc

Date: Saturday, December 5, 2020

Time: 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

More Information: <https://www.facebook.com/Oconomowoc-Kiwanis-Christmas-Parade-814600375336508/>



# Additional Training and Events

Due to COVID-19 and social distancing, we currently are not having any in-person trainings or informational sessions. A survey will be distributed at a later time regarding in-person trainings.



## COVID-19 Resources

**How to Talk to Your Kids About Coronavirus** - This is a great article with helpful information. The website also has games and activities for your kids to play. <https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/how-to-talk-to-your-kids-about-coronavirus>

**Parent/Caregiver Guide to Help Families Cope with the Coronavirus** - This resource will help you understand what an infectious disease is, and how you can help your family cope. <https://www.nctsn.org/print/2251>

**COVID-19 Updates from the Department of Children and Families** - The Department of Children and Families is working closely with DHS and is committed to keeping you informed about COVID-19 and its impact here in Wisconsin. For up-to-date information, please go to: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/covid-19>

**Waukesha County Public Health** - Waukesha County Public Health website provides up-to-date information about the number of COVID-19 cases, the latest news and information, how to protect yourself and your family, and more. Go to: <https://www.waukeshacounty.gov/COVID19>

### Craft Time! Yarn Pumpkins By: [onelittleproject.com](http://onelittleproject.com)

A fun (messy!) little project that can be great as a table centerpiece or a fall mantle!

What You'll Need:

- \* 21 pieces of orange yarn, cut to 36-inch lengths
- \* 2 ounces of white glue (or Mod Podge - See #4 below)
- \* 1 balloon (12 inch size)
- \* 1 brown and 1 green pipe cleaner
- \* Plastic fork

What You'll Do:

1. Blow up the balloon. The bigger you blow the balloon, the more yarn you'll need - the measurements above are for a half-full balloon.
2. If you haven't, cut your yarn. If you make it much longer than the 36-inches, they risk getting tangled in the glue.
3. Hint: Take one of the piece of yarn and tie it to the end of the balloon. Then, hang it from an upper kitchen cabinet handle. It is way easier and cleaner than trying to manipulate the balloon while it is on a flat surface.
4. Pour the glue into a small bowl. It takes about 2 ounces per pumpkin. Note: Do not water down the glue unless it starts to dry (and then, only to get it to the right consistency). You can try adding corn starch or flour mixed with a bit of water to the glue. You can also try using slightly watered down Mod Podge instead of glue.
5. Dunk a piece of yarn into the glue and swirl it with the fork until completely covered with glue. Hold the end of the yard with your fingers and gently run it between the tines of the fork to remove the glue. Hint: If you run the yarn through your fingers instead, you risk removing nearly all of the glue.

6. Place the glue-covered yarn strand and press the end down somewhere and wind it around the balloon, pressing down the ends of the yarn to secure them in place.
7. Repeat with remaining yarn.
8. Hang pumpkins to dry. Be sure to put something under them in case they drip glue. It will take at least 24 hours to dry.
9. VERY IMPORTANT: Press your fingers down on the yarn to detach the glue from the balloon - around the entire surface of the balloon!
10. Make a small hole in the balloon close to the knot. It won't pop there, but it will allow the air to leak slowly so you can detach any yarn from the balloon as it shrinks.
11. Remove the balloon
12. Wrap the pipe cleaners around your little finger to create a spiral. You can likely just tuck the pipe cleaners into the yarn and it will stay in place.



HAPPY  
THANKSGIVING DAY



### Contact Numbers:

#### Foster Care Social Workers:

Waukesha County  
Health & Human Services  
262-548-7212  
Michelle Lim, Foster Care  
Supervisor  
262-970-4761

Cassie BeLow ..... 262-896-8574  
Rhonda Klinger ..... 262-548-7240  
Jennifer Mantei ..... 262-548-7250  
Libby Sinclair ..... 262-548-7277  
Hilary Smith ..... 262-548-7254

#### Case Management Social Workers:

Angie Sadler, Ongoing Social Work  
Supervisor  
262-548-7272  
Eric Calvino, Ongoing Social Work  
Supervisor  
262-548-7271  
Eve Altizer, Ongoing Social Work  
Supervisor  
262-548-7267

Nicole Allende ..... 262-548-7265  
Wyatt Caldwell ..... 262-896-8281  
Kimberly Dudzik ..... 262-548-7347  
Stephanie Engle ..... 262-548-7424  
Megan Fishler ..... 262-896-8570  
Abbey Girman ..... 262-548-7695  
Sharon Godwin ..... 262-548-7684  
Laura Jahnke ..... 262-548-7359  
Alyssa Jones ..... 262-548-7239  
Jessica Larsen ..... 262-548-7346  
Maria Maurer ..... 262-548-7345  
Rachel O'Sullivan ..... 262-548-7639  
Johanna Ploeger ..... 262-896-6857  
Elizabeth Russo ..... 262-548-7349  
Kim Sampson ..... 262-548-7273  
Linda Senger ..... 262-548-7698  
Brittany Sutton ..... 262-548-7262

Children's Mental Health  
Outreach  
262-548-7666

Medical Emergency: 911

Family Emergency: 211 or  
262-547-3388



If an Allegation of Abuse or  
Neglect has been made against  
you, please call:

FASPP  
Norma Schoenberg  
920-922-9627